

# EXHIBIT E **The Herald-Times**

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## **Column: A year like no other**

*The Tight Wire*

**Stephen Crane** Herald-Times

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I pen this column with a strange mix of emotions, knowing it's set to be published on my last "official" day as the editor at the H-T.

Starting tomorrow, Jill Bond will be at the helm, and I wish her the best of luck in the journey ahead.

But I'm a sentimental sort, and any time I'm on the cusp of a new chapter of life, I'm often inspired to a quick look in the rearview to see from whence I came and how I got to this next pivot point.

I'll be honest, this last year has been the most difficult of my life. I've certainly had more challenging moments in time, but never such an extended duration of adversity. And I know I'm not the only one.

High stress is built into the DNA of the newspaper industry. Google "Top 10 stressful jobs" and you'll be hard pressed to find a list that doesn't include newspaper work.

But this last year, well, words do no justice.

Here at the H-T, we've been through the ringer — particularly those staffers who preceded my return exactly one year ago and will continue on after my departure. Jill's arrival tomorrow marks their fifth top editor transition at the newspaper in the last 26 months, starting with Bob Zaltsberg's retirement at the end of February 2019.

Those transitions are never easy, but add ownership changes, deadline shifts, the staffing reductions and print locations — among countless others — and you have a recipe for added stress and general anxiety.

In the "golden age" of yesteryear, any one of those transitions at a newspaper would have been seismic, generally constituting months of preplanning and months of adjustment on the back end as the dust settled.

Those days are no more, and for awhile this past year, these many changes and challenges seemed to arrive on a weekly basis, each one like another gut punch, leaving us all just trying to catch our breath.

And of course, then there's the ongoing pandemic that had the world in a white-knuckle grip this time last year. Its clutches are certainly starting to loosen, but its effect on the newspaper business was swift. The world as we knew it came to a screeching halt, and advertising withered on the vine in a matter of weeks. Stores closed, events got canceled and the furloughs began — and continued for the next six months.

Through it all, we put out the newspaper — every. damn. day. Through it all, we still maintained our place as the most comprehensive news source in the area. And we still produced the best journalism around.

So much of it now seems like a blurry dream, like those first few moments just after waking up, when the remnants still linger but soon slip away the harder you try to recall.

But what sticks out most are the people, and my colleagues and coworkers top the list. We went to hell and back this past year, and we will forever be bonded by the experience. In case you haven't heard, the relationships we have in this world are the only things that matter, and I'm grateful for those I formed.

I'm obliged to give a special word of thanks to Rich Janzaruk, the H-T photographer. He and I were often the only ones in the office through the worst of it last year. By nature of my rural abode and its lack of internet, I could not work remotely. And by nature of his own job description, he, too, had to be in office and "on scene" more often than not. His presence, in and of itself, was cathartic amid the craziness of the world. But his empathy, his understanding, his support — and his friendship — grew to be far more meaningful.

Staffers Janice Rickert and Carol Kugler aren't far behind. Once the office opened back up for a voluntary return, they were on hand nearly every day.

I sometimes joke that Janice is the brains of the whole operation — but it's only a half joke. Her devotion to this newspaper, and to the community it serves, is unparalleled. If and when she decides to take her well deserved retirement, the gap she leaves behind will be nearly impossible to bridge.

And if Janice is the brains, then Carol serves as the arms, always ready to support her colleagues in big ways and small. Her intuitive, warm nature is heaven sent, and she walks the

proverbial “talk.” She, too, is such an invaluable piece of the puzzle, and I will miss her caring spirit.

Of course, there’s Laura Lane — easily one of the best journalists in the state, in my humblest of opinions. T’was an honor to see her work, and to work alongside her in the process. She’s a straight shooter with a heart of gold — despite her best efforts to conceal. And best of all, that heart is for the underdog, a passion I share.

Jenny Tilley was vital in keeping readers up to speed on the ever-evolving developments of COVID over the last year. She served as the primary COVID reporter and digital puppet master, and the latter role will continue in the coming months as she transitions to a full-time digital position. She will continue to be a huge asset moving forward.

Emily C. and Emily E. are still early in their careers, but their futures are bright. And I’m excited to see where the twists and turns of life may take them.

Ernest Rollins and Michael Reschke are no longer at the newspaper, but they were around for most of the year. They, too, have bright futures ahead and were invaluable contributors to the cause throughout the year.

Boris Ladwig is a recent edition to the newsroom, and he brings a wealth of experience, wisdom and skill to the job. By all accounts, he knows no gear but sixth, and he’s already producing top-notch journalism that we are thankful to have. I’m eager to see what else he produces as time goes on.

I know the community has been riddled with questions and concerns in recent years, amid the many changes. But as I’ve said before, I will say again — to a person, the H-T newsroom is filled with people devoted to this most noble profession of journalism and to the community. I guarantee we share in many of your concerns, but the mission before us stays the same. And those who remain will continue to carry that torch until they can run no more.

So a word to the wise ... give them a break, give them the benefit of the doubt, give them support, give them an occasional word of encouragement, and by all means, give them baked goods.

And above all, support your local newspaper — produced by local people serving local readers.

Thanks for reading. — Stephen Crane, editor